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NEW PROGRAM PROVIDES TRAINING FOR INDUSTRIAL EMPLOYMENT

The benefits of value-added agricultural processing are extending beyond economic development and job creation to expanded post-secondary education opportunities for one region of the province.

With the announcement of two new canola crushing plants to be located in Yorkton, the Parkland Regional College is responding to the anticipated labour market demand for power engineering technicians.

This fall, the college will offer the Power Engineering Technician Certificate Program from the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology. Students will ultimately graduate from SIAST with fourth class power engineering inter-provincial credentials.

Although the main impetus for the new program is the impending construction of the two major canola crushing plants, SIAST and Institute Programs Co-ordinator Connie Brown notes that demand for the skill is widespread.

"In general, there is a need for power engineers. We also have large potash mines in the area, which have been experiencing some expansion, as well," she stated.

Completion of the program will equip participants to work in industrial settings. "Students are trained to operate boilers in large industrial plants and to perform the maintenance and all the different operations that go along with it," Brown said.

They will also learn about safety, with the inclusion of Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) and Confined Space courses. The extra safety training is an example of the way the college tries to enhance the curriculum when offering a program.

A hands-on component is a key part of the course. Two work placements require that students spend time in a plant. As well, three weeks of each semester will be spent at a power plant lab in Saskatoon.

"They are working with equipment that could be very dangerous, so they need to know what they're doing," Brown said.

The Parkland Regional College is accepting 12 applicants for the power engineering program. Although

(more)

there are still spots available, Brown expects a full class, given the interest indicated by people who have contacted her. The school expects to draw students from beyond the east-central region, due to waiting lists at other institutions that offer the course.

The smaller class size will enable more interactive learning and greater attention from the instructor. Students can also access the college's well-developed support services.

The next step in preparation for the new course will be the recruitment of an instructor, who will be required to possess second-class power engineering certification.

The program begins September 29 and runs for 37 weeks over two semesters before wrapping up on June 26. The next round will likely begin in fall 2009.

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